

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

How do you go about getting simple wisdom for everyday life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. They sent some of their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to meet with him. “Teacher,” they said, “we know how honest you are. You teach the way of God truthfully. You are impartial and don’t play favorites. Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

But Jesus knew their evil motives. “You hypocrites!” he said. “Why are you trying to trap me? Here, show me the coin used for the tax.” When they handed him a Roman coin, he asked, “Whose picture and title are stamped on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. “Well, then,” he said, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.” His reply amazed them, and they went away.

That same day Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question: “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies without children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother’s name.’ Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children, so his brother married the widow. But the second brother also died, and the third brother married her. This continued with all seven of them. Last of all, the woman also died. So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her.”

Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God. For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. But now, as to whether there will be a resurrection of the dead—haven’t you ever read about this in the Scriptures? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ So he is the God of the living, not the dead.” When the crowds heard him, they were astounded at his teaching. **Matthew 22:15-33 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

How would YOU describe Jesus’ teaching?

What did Jesus teach in this passage that directly applies to your life?

All those who had faith in God, whose bodies died, are alive with “the God of the living” right now! Who would you most like to meet in Heaven?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

“Seek a relationship when you pray, not answers. You won’t always find answers, but you will always find Jesus.”

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Does bold faith include the humility to be open to the possibility that you may be wrong?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They replied, “He is the son of David.”

Jesus responded, “Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah ‘my Lord’? For David said,

‘The LORD said to my Lord, Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.’

Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?” No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. **Matthew 22:34-46 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Considering what Jesus said about the most important commandment: list, in order of your actual priority, the following: your relationship with God, your relationship with yourself, your relationship with family members, your relationship with neighbors. Is your order the same as God’s?

The Jews had a very worldly set of expectations for the Messiah culminating in their tragic rejection of Jesus and the plan of God he revealed. Do you have any expectations of God that are wrong? How will you know?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, please help me to have a clean mind, a pure heart, and wide open eyes when I approach the Scripture, listen to wise Christians, and assess the world around me. Help me to see clearly, obey faithfully, and love accordingly.

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Define love using three descriptive words or phrases.

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

At the Last Supper on the night before Jesus was crucified, he said: “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.” **John 15:1–17 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Does it inspire you to know that Jesus prayed for you and wants his spirit and words to remain in you so that you can produce a great impact for God? How are you “remaining” in Jesus?

Jesus taught his disciples, “Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” less than 24 hours before he gave his life on the cross for them *and you*. This is REAL love—giving what you have for the benefit of someone else. Who are you being called to love sacrificially today?

Do you want to be Jesus’ friend? Do what he commands—love each other!

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for giving me not only an example of real love, but also giving me your patience, power, and presence. Help me keep these in mind as I set out to obey you today!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you trust Jesus, why? If you don't trust Jesus, why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

After Jesus' death and resurrection, Matthew records the following stunning events: Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don't be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”

The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’ If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble.” So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” **Matthew 28:1–20 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Jesus promised to give believers his protection, power and presence through the Holy Spirit. If you are a believer, how are you experiencing each of these?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, help me to be a genuine disciple who helps others become genuine disciples!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

How would you describe your attitude when you are operating out of your strength?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Peter, as a leader in Jesus’ church through the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote: For the Lord’s sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

It is God’s will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God’s slaves, so don’t use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.

You who are slaves must submit to your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unjust treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.

For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered.

He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.

By his wounds you are healed.

Once you were like sheep who wandered away.

But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

1 Peter 2:13-25 NLT0

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

For whose sake do we submit to human authority?

When we ARE human authority, how are we to wisely wield that power and influence?

In what areas of your life are you personally responsible to 1) submit to authority, and 2) wield power and influence? How does Jesus help you understand your role in each?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, you have given me great freedom. Teach me to be a slave to your ways so that I can be useful in your hands. Help me to be humble as I submit to authority. Help me to be wise and kind when I wield power and authority.